

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-13 PM-05 DODE-00 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 INT-05 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 COME-00

DOE-15 SOE-02 TRSE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 /093 W

-----066447 182033Z /70

R 180230Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7640

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY MANILA

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, EGEN, FJ

SUBJECT: SUVA HIGHLIGHTS

1. FOLLOWING IS THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF SPOT REPORTS ON RECENT EVENTS IN FIJI WHICH AMEMBASSY SUVA WILL BE PRODUCING ON A PERIODIC BASIS. GIVEN PAUCITY OF INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORTING FROM THIS AREA, EMBASSY HOPES THAT INFORMATION CONTAINED IN "SUVA HIGHLIGHTS" WILL BE OF INTEREST TO ADDRESSEES.

2. MORE FIJIAN TROOPS FOR U.N. - "FIJI TIMES" JULY 13 REPORTED

THAT PRIME MINISTER RATU MARA HAS SAID FIJI WILL CONSIDER MAKING ITS TROOPS AVAILABLE FOR U.N. PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS SHOULD THEY BE REQUESTED FOR SERVICE. RATU MARA REPORTEDLY TOLD PRESS THAT U.N. IS PLEASED WITH FIJI'S PARTICIPATION IN UNIFIL AND MAY ASK FOR FIJIAN VOLUNTEERS FOR AFRICA.

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COMMENT: EVEN IF THE U.N. WERE TO SEND TROOPS TO AFRICA, FIJI WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO PRODUCE A CONTINGENT, PARTICULARLY WHILE UNIFIL IS IN OPERATION. LOCAL MILITARY COMMANDERS HAVE COMPLAINED THAT LACK OF OFFICERS IN FIJIAN MILITARY MAY NECESSITATE LONGER TOURS OF DUTY WITH UNIFIL FOR THOSE OF OFFICER RANK THAN HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN ANTICIPATED.

3. TROUBLES AT FIJI'S GOLD MINE CONTINUE BUT GOF WILL NOT NATIONALIZE - PRIME MINISTER RATUMARA TOLD PRESS JULY 11 THAT HE FELT GOF COULD SPEND ITS MONEY BETTER BY FINDING ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT FOR VATUKOULA'S EMERIOR GOLD MINE WORKERS THAN BY PURCHASING THE AILING MINE. MINERS HAVE FOR SEVERAL WEEKS BEEN ON STRIKE, AND MINE IS UP FOR SALE AT F\$31 MILLION. U.S. BUSINESSMAN WHO IS A GEOLOGIST TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT MINING EQUIPMENT IS IN POOR SHAPE AND MILL WOULD HAVE TO BE COMPLETELY RENOVATED BY ANY PURCHASER. HE ESTIMATED IT WOULD COST ABOUT F\$15 MILLION TO MAKE MINE OPERATIVE. HIS COMPANY, PACIFIC ENERGY & MINERALS LTD. FEELS, NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS GOLD IN AREA NEAR VATUKOULA AND IS DISCUSSING PROSPECTING AGREEMENT WITH GOF. MEANWHILE, PRESS HAS REPORTED FROM SYDNEY THAT NADI'S DEPUTY MAYOR, RAVINDRA SINGH, IS SELLING SHARES TO SIBERIA NICKEL FOR INTEREST IN A PROSPECTING AREA NEAR BALEVUTO IN NADI AREA. SIBERIA IS REPORTEDLY PAYING F\$155,000 CASH AND ISSUING 250,000 SHARES AT 30 CENTS FOR A 25 PERCENT INTEREST IN THE PROSPECT. REMAINING 75 PERCENT IS REPORTEDLY UNDER OPTION TO GREENVALE GROUP.

4. SUVA POWER RATES SKYROCKET - THE FIJI ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY (FEA) ON JULY 10 ANNOUNCED NEW POWER RATES FOR SUVA FOLLOWING TAKEOVER OF SUVA POWER PLANT PREVIOUSLY OPERATED BY SUVA CITY COUNCIL. ALTHOUGH CONSUMERS IN SUVA HAD EXPECTED RATE INCREASES, ANNOUNCEMENT THAT DOMESTIC CONSUMERS WOULD FACE COST INCREASES OF 41 PERCENT, COMMERCIAL CONSUMERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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51 PERCENT AND INDUSTRIAL CONSUMERS 33 PERCENT CAUSED PUBLIC DISMAY. FEA EXPLANATION THAT SUVA HAS ENJOYED AN "ELECTRICITY HOLIDAY" AND NOW MUST PAY ITS SHARE FOR NATION-WIDE ELECTRICITY DEVELOPMENT HAS NOT SATISFIED CITY CONSUMERS, AND PUBLIC MEETINGS ARE BEING HELD TO DISCUSS MEANS OF PROTESTING RATE HIKE.

5. GOVERNMENT TO CUT SPENDING - OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE FOLLOWING CABINET MEETING JULY 11 EXPLAINED THAT GOF HAD DURING YEARS OF WORLD RECESSION INCREASED SPENDING IN ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT LEVELS AND SOFTEN NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF RECESSION ON LOCAL ECONOMY. PRESS RELEASE SAID ECONOMY IS NOW MAKING PROGRESS AND GOVT HOPES TO TIGHTEN ITS SPENDING. OVERSEAS RESERVES WERE REPORTED TO BE BETWEEN F\$115 MILLION TO F\$125 MILLION. STATEMENT CALLED FOR PARTICULAR EFFORTS IN THE FOOD SECTOR TO UTILIZE LOCAL CLIMATE AND LAND RESOURCES IN ORDER TO CUT BACK IMPORTS. NOTING CHINESE AND KOREAN EXAMPLES (EFFECTS OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISITS THERE), STATEMENT CALLED FOR HARD WORK AND PERSEVERANCE IN NATION BUILDING.

6. FIJI TO JOIN INTOSAI - THE CABINET HAS AGREED THAT FIJI

WILL BECOME A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF
SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTIONS (INTOSAI). CABINET REPORT SAID
INTOSAI WAS FORMED TO PROMOTE EXCHANGES OF IDEAS AND EXPER-
IENCE IN PUBLIC FINANCIAL CONTROL. FIJI WILL CONTRIBUTE
F\$264 ANNUALLY FOR MEMBERSHIP.
CONDON

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